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ABSTRACT

A discussion of articulation in second language education between instructional levels looks at the current state of articulation, issues in the transition from secondary to higher education, and proposes a new approach that shifts the focus from product to process. Three forms of articulation are distinguished: vertical; horizontal; and multi-disciplinary. It is noted that most current articulation from secondary to college levels is vertical, and the horizontal aspect is underdeveloped, which may be associated with a high rate of attrition in language enrollments between these levels. It is suggested that articulation efforts focus on reconciling the fundamentally different goals and educational agendas at the two instructional levels, and that communication between professionals at both levels be improved. The proposed shift is from the traditional normative input/language replication paradigm to an authentic input/language creation paradigm that focuses on the learner and variables such as different language background knowledge, maturation levels, and motivations that affect curriculum design at different levels. A longer sequence of language study is an anticipated result of this approach. Contains 26 references. (MSE)

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Inter-level Articulation: A New Paradigm for the Profession

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Inter-level Articulation: A New Paradigm for the Profession

Introduction

The issue of successful articulation between levels of instruction is at the heart of our profession. How does the learner interact with his or her study of a foreign language over an eight to ten year sequence, and how can we ensure that this is a healthy and mutually beneficial process for the learner and respective institution at each level? Finding the answer to this question, especially in the secondary school to college level context, has been the most comprehensive and, yet, illusive task to be addressed by the second language teaching profession. It's definitions encompass issues as broad as interdisciplinary education (Lange, 1982) and the fundamental basis for public school education (Grittner, 1976). The discussion of the problems of articulation spans nearly one hundred years (Breul, 1899) in literature as solutions have been offered, re-offered and transformed for the changing academic climate. During this time a national model for articulation has neither been established nor has research investigated or identified the key elements necessary to facilitate this transition. The purpose of this paper is to describe where we have been as a profession, where we now stand on the issue of articulation, and suggest new directions for articulation efforts. In doing so, I will first, provide a brief review of the forms of articulation in education, second, describe the evolution of issues relevant to the transition from secondary school to college level study of a foreign language, third, describe the current articulation paradigm and its need in education, and, finally, suggest a shift in this paradigm from product focused top-down and suspended models to a process focused inter-level model (Garza and Watzke, 1994).

Defining Articulation

The term "articulation" subsumes three definitions or forms of the articulation process which act to link elements of curricula internally, sequentially, and externally (Lafayette, 1980, p. 68). Lange (p. 120-126), who provides one of the most complete reviews of literature on articulation, has termed these three forms of articulation horizontal, vertical, and multidisciplinary.

[Place Figure One Approximately Here]

In the secondary school and college level context, horizontal articulation refers to consistencies between language programs at the same level. Thus, a school district or high school in which all ninth grade Spanish classes follow the same curriculum or assess according to the same outcomes would be described as horizontally articulated.

Vertical articulation in this context describes consistencies or links between levels of instruction. A school district, high school, or a school to college transition in which each successive year or level builds on the knowledge and skills acquired by learners would be well articulated vertically.

Finally, multidisciplinary articulation describes links between subjects as the study of a foreign language takes place in conjunction with other subject areas, majors, or concentrations. Educational institutions which allow learners the opportunity to explore the art, history, and social phenomena of a culture as it relates to the foreign language places an emphasis of study beyond the foreign language classroom and links this study with the vast knowledge and interpretations to be contributed by other related disciplines of study.

Discussion of secondary school to college level articulation has focused primarily on the problems associated with the vertical movement of learners from one level of study to the next (Grittner, 1969 and 1976, Bosworth, Nollendorfs and Marshall, 1980, Lange, 1982, Byrnes, 1990a and 1990b). However, these discussions

have rarely informed us of the inseparable link between horizontal and vertical articulation processes. The nature of successful articulation, in terms of multiple programs, is dependent on the degree to which each level is horizontally articulated. Horizontal articulation is a prerequisite for successful transition from one level to the next. This primacy is illustrated in figure one by the individual secondary school and college foreign language programs at each level. If discrepancies exist between individual programs at one level, the ability for students to progress from one level to the next, vertically, is impaired. Only when students, by chance, progress from one individual school program to a related individual college level program is there the opportunity for vertical articulation to occur.

Unfortunately, the scenario of high school students who have completed four years of language study only to be placed into a beginning college level foreign language course is not uncommon and relates directly to horizontal articulation primacy. Anecdotal evidence of "back placement" (Halff and Frisbie, 1977, p. 401), or the placing of students into first year college courses who have studied more than three years of that language in high school, pervades in the articulation literature. Quantitative studies of this phenomenon have revealed two findings associated with the lack of horizontal consistency: there is a strong correlation between years of prior study and achievement in first year college courses, but placement into the upper levels of college level foreign language programs cannot be associated with any number of years of prior study (Halff and Frisbie, 1977, Watt, 1994).

Efforts to effectively establish consistency between programs in an attempt to improve high school to college level articulation have been attempted by the establishment of state ad hoc committees made up of representatives from individual colleges and secondary schools (Mosher, 1989). However, the results of these efforts is as yet anecdotal and have failed to document achievement in longer sequences of study. Further, the actual number of students on a national basis continuing a

longer sequence of foreign language study from secondary school to the college level is minimal at best. Lambert describes these alarming enrollment patterns as two triangles existing at each level in which only 7% of high school students study at the fourth year level and a comparable 18% of college students study at the third, or advanced, level (1994a, p. 49-50, 1994b, p. 131)

[Place Figure Two Approximately Here]

There exists an almost universal 50% attrition rate at both the secondary school and college level at each increasing year, or level, of language study. Similarly, the correlation between secondary school study of a foreign language and the likelihood of continued study at the college level decreases with the amount of years studied in high school (Lambert, 1994b, p. 129). Although these enrollment patterns undoubtedly reflect state foreign language requirements for individual institutions or levels, one can conclude that 1) few students ever reach advanced levels of study of a foreign language at either the high school or college level and 2) even fewer students experience a seamless transition from their study of a foreign language at the high school level to the college level. Put more frankly, if the goal of our profession is ensure longer sequences of second language learning which lead to studies beyond the beginning or novice level, then we have failed.

Solutions to the Problem: From Product to Process

The history of our profession's view towards solutions and the need for articulation take both product and process foci. As early as 1899 Breul (1899, p. 10) suggested that the profession look beyond theory to the secondary school classroom and what can be accomplished within the restrictions of time and age differences. Thus, a 'practical mastery' cannot be hoped for, Breul stated, 'But a good deal may be done at school, and whatever is learned should be learned well and intelligently so as to become a good basis for later practice.' It has taken, however, nearly one hundred

years for our profession to return from the view of articulation as a product and student-independent focus to the process and student-centered focus which Breul suggested.

In the late sixties and seventies Grittner (1969, especially 1976) and Webb (1979) provided insights into historical and institutional obstacles for successful articulation. Grittner described secondary school to college level articulation as a 'vicious circle': school programs run the risk of being phased out of the curriculum if they are based on the college program. On the other hand, if articulation is based on goals achievable for a broad spectrum of high school students, then students may be unable to compete at an arbitrarily determined level when they reach college (1969, p. 79). Likewise, Grittner states that the profession has been unable to devise a twelfth-grade course which will prove satisfactory to all the hundreds of college departments across the nation or exert pressure in any significant way to bring about conformity in course offerings among the various high schools and institutions of higher education (p. 79). Webb (p. 466) further defines the idea of the 'vicious circle' as resulting from the ignorance of educators of the goals, expectations, and requirements at each level of instruction. Surveys revealed that not only were teachers at both the high school and college level uninterested in programs at other levels of instruction, but few formal channels of communication existed to allow for the discussion or planning of articulation.

Historically, articulation has suffered because of fundamentally different goals and educational agendas at these two levels of instruction. Grittner points out that the public high school was not founded as a college preparatory institution, but rather, as a terminal institution. Paradoxically, as many as 80% of all secondary school students studied a foreign language in the 1890's and 1900's, primarily classical languages (1976, p. 199). It was not uncommon at that time, for scholars of the classics to promote elitist attitudes and purposes for the study of a foreign

language and, at the same time, lodge complaints of trends towards the instruction of "soft" studies of German and French (p. 199). The failure to maintain and adapt the study of the classics and other emerging foreign languages, according to Grittner, to the developing and more egalitarian public schools and to train teachers specifically for the instruction of foreign languages at the high school level lead to their decrease as a subject worth learning by large numbers of students. The study of foreign languages was pushed into the peripheral and no longer considered one of the basic subjects (p. 200-201). Secondary school instruction of foreign languages to this day risks elimination if it pursues the college-preparatory agenda and, in the process, appears too elitist (p. 201).

Both Grittner and Webb stress that communication between teachers at different levels of instruction is a key component for improved articulation. Webb states that the awareness of educational goals at each level will allow for curricular adjustments to be made by both high school and college level teachers to promote the idea of a continuation from one level to the next rather than a 'plunge' (p. 466). Grittner proposed that the solution of articulation relies both on the teaching profession and individual students in each program and less on making changes within specific institutions. Students who show promise in the study of foreign languages and who have expressed interest in study at the college level should be encouraged to engage in supplemental self-study based on instructional materials relating to the student's college of interest (1969, p. 80). The profession, on the other hand, must be committed to supplying competent professional teachers who can function in the high schools (p. 200) and promoting foreign language education in the tenure process at the college level (p. 205). In his view, successful articulation comes from a 'system of rewards to the individual rather than a mandated curriculum aimed at thousands (p. 204).' Granting students, for example, back credit for successful placement into intermediate or advanced college level courses presents

students with a motivating, financially rewarding, and flexible (p. 204) incentive for achievement within a national system of individual foreign language programs.

The 1980's marked a shift from the focus of articulation primarily on a common curriculum or the products of instruction to the processes of language learning (Bosworth, Nollendorfs and Marchall, 1980, Lafayette, 1980, Lange, 1982). Lange (1982) noted that new proposals to solve the articulation problem exemplified the 'potential for the profession to think about articulation not as a product but as a process (p. 134).' Process focused issues addressed articulation in the form of horizontal consistency within the framework of educational goals differing from one level to the next. Bosworth, Nollendorfs and Marchall (1980) stated that 'articulation should not be thought of as a problem to be solved once and for all but rather as an ongoing, integral part of the educational process that takes into account the curricular, philosophic, and social factors of foreign language learning (p. 3).' Lafayette (1980) contrasted the term curriculum with articulation and stated that articulation 'does not represent anything concrete; rather it stands for a relationship among elements, a relationship whose responsibility is to link, [which], for foreign languages is crucial because it is taught at different levels (p. 68).'

Lafayette acknowledges that 'articulation between school and university is a complex matter. Their goals are different, they operate independently of each other, and the student populations [at the university level are] not limited to specific geographic boundaries (p. 71).' He argues that language learning sequences have traditionally been built on the purpose of looking ahead, that is, instruction at one level was based primarily on the goal of preparing students for the next level (p. 69). But, in his opinion, 'the only viable approach to articulation is for teachers to be informed of students *past* achievement and build on that achievement whenever appropriate (p. 69).' One suggestion for accomplishing this would be for instructors at each level to agree on minimum competencies for, at least, the beginning and

intermediate levels. It would then be up to the teachers at each level to work towards horizontal articulation in choosing the methods, learning activities, and objectives best suited to their teaching environment to meet these general competencies (p. 66).

Bosworth, Nollendorfs and Marchall, in their discussion of the problem, cite characteristics of the secondary school teaching environment which impair the preparation of students for college level study: the inability to purchase new textbooks, class size, tracking or varying abilities of students, interruptions, low student interest, a workforce with little time or resources for remediation and in-servicing (p. 4-5). These authors provide 'basic principals for articulation for the 80's' meant to guide the profession's efforts:

1) Continuity or articulation as a regular concern of our profession.

2) Flexibility or the responsiveness to characteristics of American education in diversity and change.

3) Involvement by all those who can effect change such as the community, administrators, counselors, and teachers.

4) Understanding of all aspects of the educational environment including levels of competency, philosophies, content, practical aims and personal aspirations, as well as idealized goals.

They also stress the importance of college level involvement in this process by disseminating information, developing more sophisticated tracking procedures for incoming students, and taking seriously both the professional and personal qualities necessary to be a high school instructor in training and educating a secondary school workforce (p. 4-5).

Lange also suggests communication between levels of instruction to establish outcomes for levels and, most importantly, assessment instruments which are in tune

with these outcomes (p. 134). He cites proficiency, rather than discrete point testing, as a means for assessing outcomes. Thus, he presents a more fitting approach for an educational system where the term "level" has no bearing on content (p. 116) and individual teachers still choose their own methods, techniques, and foci despite product focused solutions such as a common textbook and curriculum (p. 121).

The early 90's have seen renewed calls for efforts in articulation which have emphasized both curricular uniformity and learning processes in foreign language instruction. Kinoshita and Chiamatsu (1994), as in the early seventies, took a product-focused approach by surveying the course content and objectives of high school and college level Japanese language programs to reveal broad differences at each level of instruction. They suggest an "understanding" and "respect" for the goals of each instructional level (p. 4) and, at the same time, an earlier introduction of kanji (or Chinese characters) in schools to better prepare students for the focus on linguistic skills at the college level.

However, Nelson (1990) provides a perspective on secondary school learning which proposes that increased time or changes in course content alone will not significantly effect student achievement. Citing studies by Walberg (1988), Dewalt and Rodwell (1988), Cotton (1990) and others, Nelson suggests that too many factors are involved in the teaching and learning process which especially limit the influence time has on student achievement (p. 5). The ramifications of this research for articulation efforts is to move beyond the emphasis on curricular products and the length of time of study to include changes in instructional delivery which address such factors as student ability and development, student motivation and self-concept, and the student peer group outside school (p. 3).

Byrnes (1990a) also recognizes that increased time alone will not promote higher achievement in foreign language learners, but that articulation must address other aspects of the educational process, such as short- and long-term goals which

recognize that there will not be language skills parity in acquisition, rethinking the entire instructional sequence and delivery to address gradual changes in educational and second language development, syllabus and curricular design models and materials development to address student needs according to these developmental changes, outcomes assessments which 'strike a delicate balance between national norms and valid local conditions', and a rethinking of the content and modes of language use assessed by standardized tests (p. 2).

Byrnes (1990b) specifically warns of the use of proficiency testing and Guidelines statements to assess longer sequences of language learning. In her words, proficiency testing is not the impartial assessment of years of instruction but 'communicatively-oriented, curriculum-based achievement testing (p. 23).' With reference to articulation, the Proficiency Guidelines are particularly dangerous if 1) used as blueprints for curricular sequencing and 2) as ways of assessing learner outcomes. 'That is, these may shape both curricular statements and assessment for attainment of curricular goals by influencing content when content should be guided by considerations arising from the local instructional setting (p. 23).' She suggests that proficiency can become the cornerstone of articulation only if we consider the broader terms of the Guidelines, not the Guidelines statements themselves.

Finally, Byrnes stresses the immediate need for the profession to address articulation in response to expanded curricula and learning groups brought about by the renewed interest in instruction of second languages at the elementary school level (p. 12-13). Rather than approaching articulation in the 'top-down' (p. 11) linear equation divorced from the learner, we must address the individual's shaping of the learning progression. She proposes the intertwining of both the general educational development strand of learning with the language acquisition strand to focus not on the content of instruction, but on how knowledge is organized. Thus,

incorporating Egan's four stages of 'educational aspects of development, learning, and motivation, we may work with principals for engaging [students] in learning, unit and lesson planning, and for curriculum organizing (p. 13-15).

There is a shift, then, from a normative input/language replication paradigm to an authentic input/language creation paradigm which focuses on the learner and variables such as different language background knowledge, maturational levels, and motivations that will effect curricular design at different levels of instruction (Swaffar, Arens and Byrnes, 1991, p. 11-15). Longer sequences of study will benefit from second language instruction which includes content areas of learner interest as suggested by research identifying the strengths of content-based instruction. These longer instructional sequences will also lead to an increased number of students prepared to continue the study of second languages at the college level as specialists in fields other than the language's literature and linguistics (p. 15).

The professional challenge of the nineties lies in making this longer, student-centered, and articulated language learning sequence a reality. Early drafts of the National Standards in Foreign Language Education that include the input of authors mentioned above such as Byrnes, Lafayette, and Webb (ACTFL, 1994), for example, have grappled with the multitude of problems in establishing a content standards framework for K-12 foreign language study. The history of articulation initiatives informs us that these standards will be no more than broad considerations for local level program development and no less than an idealized learning sequence for the majority of current pre-college language instruction which takes place predominately at the high school level. Similarly, the National Foreign Language Center's (Unger, Lorish, Noda and Wada, 1993) language learning "framework" approach to the instruction of less commonly taught languages, such as that proposed for beginning Japanese language instruction, will serve only as a set of issues to be considered in program development without reference to specific

variables in levels of instruction and with superficial reference to such language learning skills as 'life-long learning (p. 20).' Most importantly, the ideal of a seamless transition of learners from one level of instruction to the next, from the high school level to the college level, may be recognized as just that: an ideal. Just as solutions to the articulation problem presented in literature have shifted from a curricular- and product-focus to a student- and process-focus, so too has the possibility of horizontal consistency at the national level lessened with the increased awareness for local level considerations in second language program development. This tendency away from absolute horizontal consistency in our understanding of vertical articulation provides the impetus for new models for facilitating this process.

Models of Vertical Articulation: Top-down, Suspended, Inter-level

Models to describe vertical articulation in the literature may be described as top-down, suspended, and inter-level (Garza and Watzke, 1995).

[Place Figure Three Approximately Here]

Top-down articulation and its secondary school to college level scenario is characterized by what Lafayette described as the tendency to teach to the next level of instruction. Curricular development is based on linguistic, task, and/or semantic analysis of the second language and mapped in a linear sequence to be learned without regard to the needs of each instructional level. Goals are predominately mandated by the college level as the final instructional institution for language learning. These mandates result in placement inconsistencies as incoming students with prior language study are placed according to the extent to which they have mastered the college level curriculum. Articulatory solutions in a top-down model focus on a common curriculum between the two levels of instruction or a watered down college curriculum for the secondary school level. This product focus describes

Grittner's scenario of high students falling victim to college level expectations as they discontinue their study of the second language.

Suspended articulation describes models in which articulation is achieved horizontally or vertically at local levels, but does not coincide with the instruction of incoming students or levels to which students graduate. Larger school districts, for example, which have labored to achieve effective K-12 programs, only to have students suffer inferior placement procedures at various colleges describe this suspended model. Likewise, college level programs which seek to find the best placement of incoming students, but experience difficulty in the extreme levels of achievement produced by a multitude of schools also describes this model. Suspended articulation also encompasses the general apathy in the profession which Webb described as a disinterest among teachers in the instructional goals of different levels of instruction. Ultimately, it is the learner who loses from this scenario for although instruction may cater to their needs at one level, it fails to prepare them for future language learning or progress.

Inter-level articulation describes efforts to facilitate language learning at the immediate level of instruction while preparing students for future learning experiences as well. This model recognizes that, despite the lack of horizontal consistency, learning succeeds by approaching language instruction as an ongoing process which constantly adapts to changing learner needs and institutional considerations. Fundamental to this model is the mandatory involvement of teachers from all levels of instruction, that is, from representatives of all levels who have a stake in facilitating longer sequences of language learning. It is recognized that local considerations will determine much of the content of the curriculum and contribute to the horizontal inconsistency on broader scale. This, by its very nature, illicits the question which is at the heart of inter-level articulation: What can we, as educators at each level, do to prepare our students for future learning in and outside

of the classroom and how can we be assured that this is a mutually beneficial process for the learner and respective learning institutions. In this way, inter-level articulation addresses the challenge of student-centered articulation which Byrnes has described.

Inter-level Articulation: TEACH Guidelines

Garza and Watzke have further defined guidelines, represented by the acronym TEACH, which facilitate the use of this student-centered model for articulation initiatives. The guidelines consider the development of cognitive abilities, affective influences, content foci, and assessment issues as the student of a foreign language progresses from the secondary school to the college level environment. Articulation is addressed within the framework of these practical guidelines and includes many of the issues in the articulation literature. Fallacies, associated with each of these guidelines, demonstrate the negative impact traditional articulation models or scenerios, particuliarly top-down, have on students. A brief overview of the TEACH guidelines and their related fallacies follows.

[Place Figure Four Approximately Here]

Time considerations address such issues as differences in the length of time it takes secondary school and college level learners to reach comparable levels of proficiency in the foreign language, the variables which lessen the effect increased time has on student achievement, and differences in time requirements for the study of different categories of languages. Time considerations reveal answers to why such differences exist and their implications for inter-level articulation initiatives and curricular development.

The *Encouragement* of the development and use of instructional materials appropriate to the age and level of the language learner questions the use of foreign language texts designed for the generic or college level learner at the secondary

school level as in the top-down scenario. Further, the development of instructional materials considered age and level appropriate are often influenced by academic expectations from the college level and with reference to the Proficiency Guidelines as Byrnes stated earlier, both of which do not account for the adolescent's academic or functional needs respectively. Materials development must further address stated student interests and reasons for language study as they change with increasing years of study of the language (Watzke, 1993b). The ability to include age-appropriate instructional materials may be directly influenced by the college level through the preparation and in-service of a knowledgeable secondary school workforce as Grittner, Bosworth et al., Byrnes and others have suggested.

Accessibility and assessment addresses attrition rates and enrollment patterns at the secondary school level and students' expectancy to continue the study of the foreign language at the college level. The issue of "accessibility versus exclusivity" explains the ramifications of denying specific populations of students study of the foreign language (Watzke, 1992 and 1993a). The mechanisms and rationale for the perpetuation of false ideas of difficulty of one foreign language over another is emphasized as a product of poor articulation efforts between the secondary school and college level. Further, administrative, attitudinal, and academic barriers to second language study my be addressed by teachers at each level of instruction in an effort to facilitate longer sequences of study. Assessment issues include the appropriateness of national standardized tests as a measure of local program achievement as addressed by Lafayette, Lange and others, and the use of biased student pools for the norming of standardized tests for the emerging less commonly taught languages. College placement procedures in the form of assessments also must reflect efforts to integrate students' prior study of the language with current level demands.

Content-based or -related instruction, as suggested by Swaffar et al., is a key to facilitating learner interest in longer sequences of study and to the view of second language study beyond the classroom to include its relationship with other disciplines of interest. It employs instructional strategies which promote the development of higher-level thinking skills and equally integrate functional uses of purpose-specific language (content) as well as grammatical knowledge (concept). The inter-level articulation model stresses a secondary school to college level curriculum which includes a balance between content and concept with the goal of greater autonomy of the student as a learner of the language as he/she progresses towards study beyond the classroom.

High school based guidelines focus curricular development on the evolving maturity of the learner in the social, academic, and cognitive domains and their implications for the instructional delivery of the foreign language from the secondary school through the college level. Progression in each of these domains centers on the goals of increased proficiency in the language and the continued adjustment of the curriculum as students gradually move towards what will be their potential choice of college-level study. These guidelines, especially, focus instruction on the current level of study and, in the process, move beyond content considerations in encouraging continued study of the second language as suggested by the new articulation paradigm.

Conclusion

The TEACH guidelines blend content and educational considerations within the inter-level model of articulation. The goal is not curricular uniformity on a national basis between programs or levels, but a means for the development, consideration, and communication of issues as guidelines which will facilitate longer language learning sequences. The history of articulation initiatives has informed us that it is

far too complex a process to be solved by simplistic and product-focused solutions such a common textbook or curriculum. Teacher, student, and local institutional variables are too numerous to allow for the ideal of a seamless transition which has pervaded past thought on the problem. We now understand articulation to be a more abstract process of linking principals or guidelines which requires continual adjustment and change and the participation from all players at all levels. As Lange has noted, articulation has been essentially unexplored with little research on the topic (p. 120). It remains to be seen whether our profession can begin to quantify the necessary components to ensure a broad spectrum of students longer sequences of study of second languages.

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Figures

Figure One. Articulation definitions.

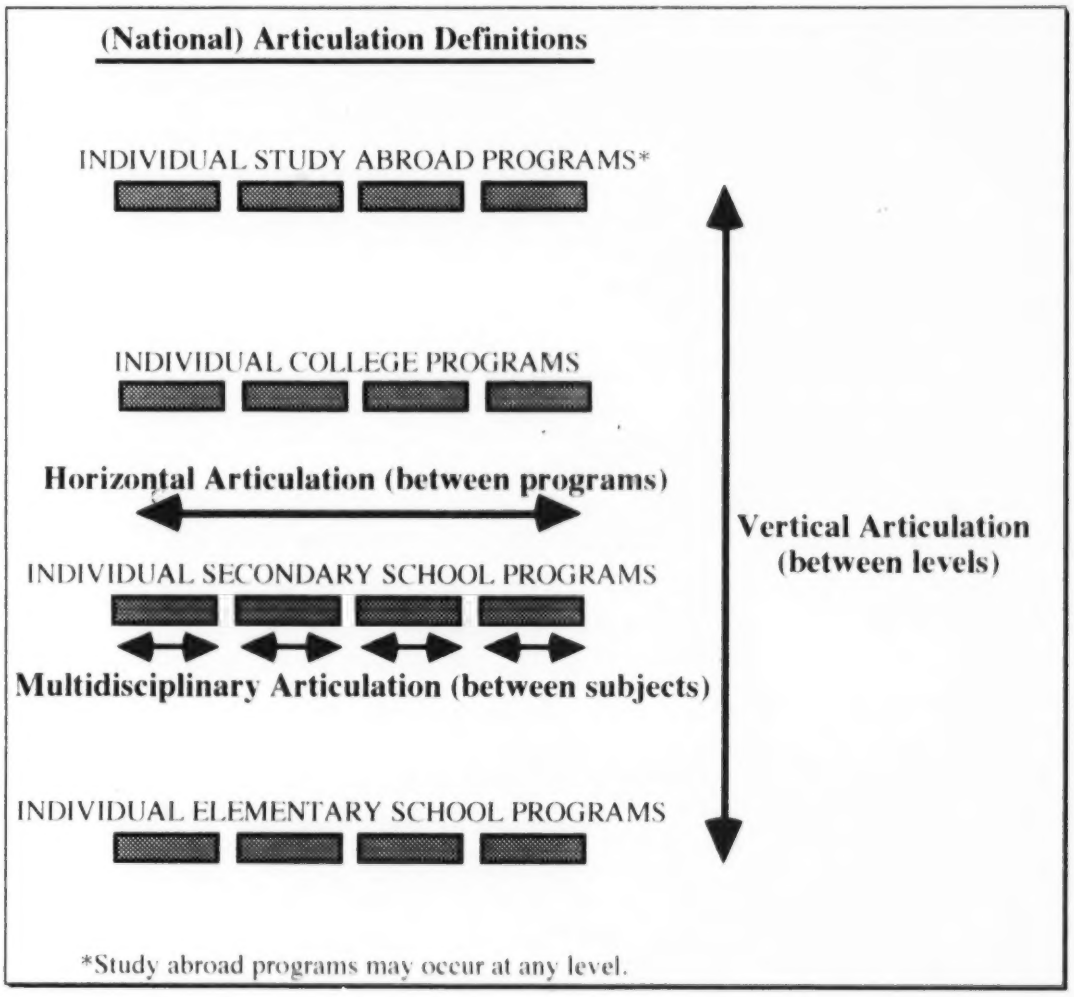

Figure Two. Secondary school and college level enrollment patterns.

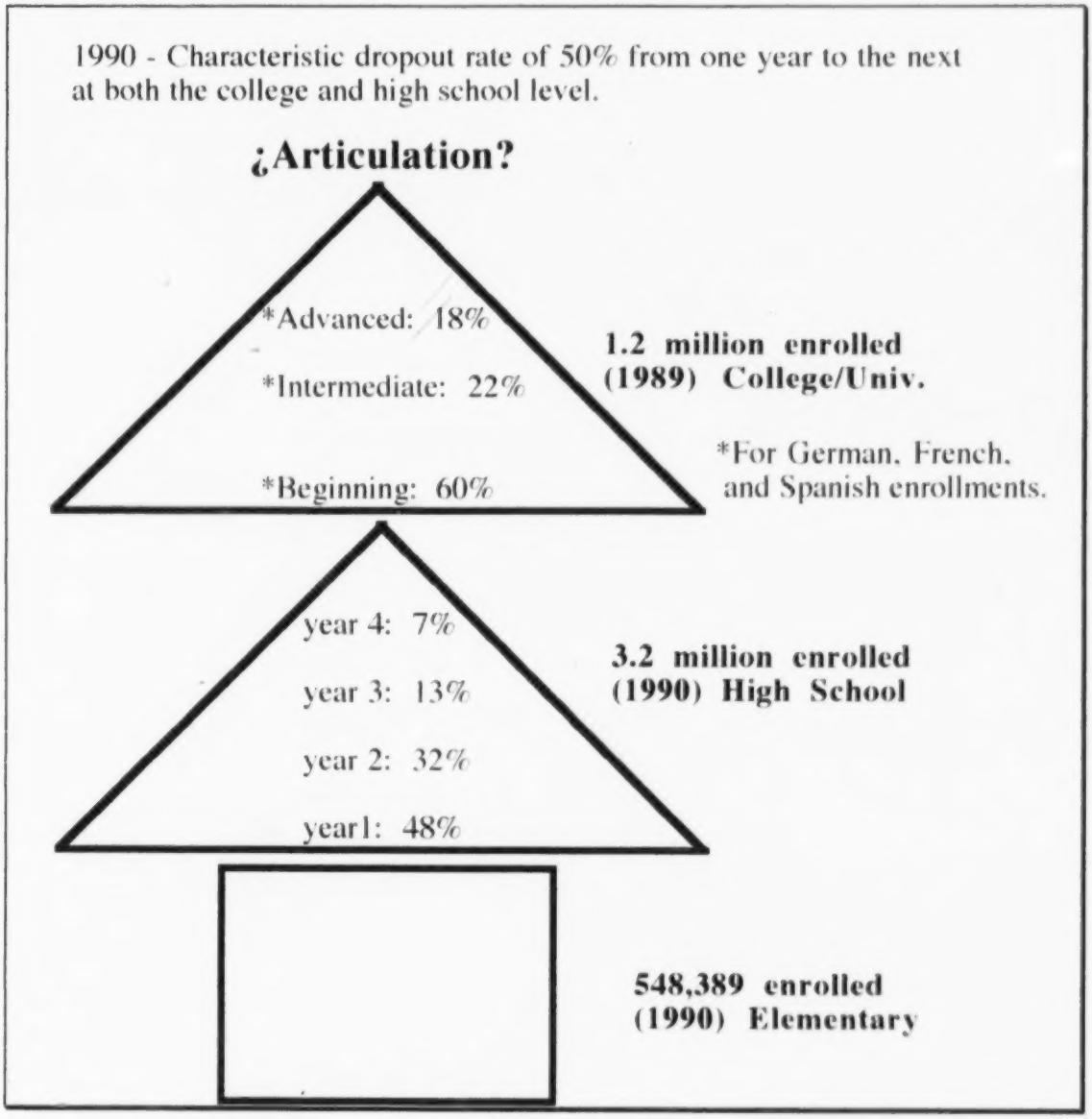

Figure Three. Vertical articulation models.

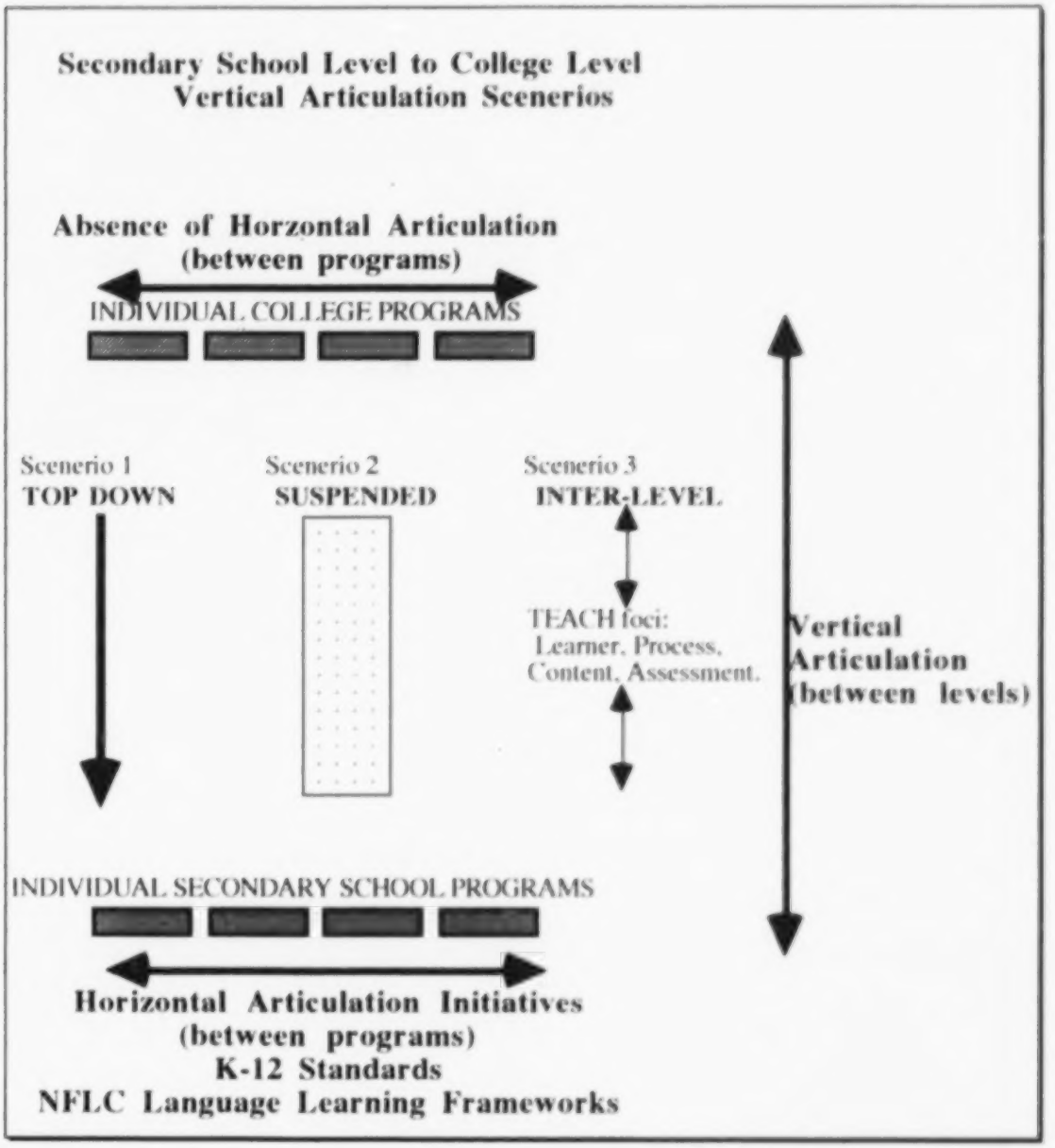

Figure Four. TEACH guidelines of inter-level articulation model.